

DOMESTIC HARMONIZER PROGRAM

2025 Annual Report

Table of Contents

Introduction	03
Key Achievements	05
Survey Results	06
Stakeholder Feedback	07
Independent Evaluation of the Program	08
Conflict Resolution Education	11
Peer Mediation in Schools	13
Conflict Resolution Education in Elementary Schools	13
Conflict Resolution Education in Middle Schools	16
Conflict Resolution Education in High Schools	18
Conflict Resolution Education for Teachers	20
Parenting Series	22
Advocacy Campaigns in Schools	23
International Day of Peace	23
The Virtual Center	24
Health and Well-being	26
Inner Spark	27
Partnership with the Asian University for Women (AUW) in Bangladesh	31
Connecting with Counselors Nationwide	33
Conclusion	34
Partners	35

Introduction

The Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative (WPDI) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) non-governmental organization founded by Forest Whitaker in 2012 to promote peace and reconciliation in disadvantaged and fragile communities worldwide, including Africa, Latin America, France, and the United States. Guided by the mission to turn conflict into opportunity, WPDI's Domestic Harmonizer Program (DHP) in the United States strengthens schools and communities by building skills that deepen understanding, encourage cooperation, and build lasting resilience.

DHP brings together students, educators, administrators, counselors, and parents by embedding conflict resolution and restorative practices into the fabric of school culture. Designed to meet the developmental needs of every grade level, the program nurtures early social-emotional skills in elementary students while offering meaningful leadership opportunities for youth in middle and high school. By training peer mediators, facilitating monthly Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) events, and delivering trauma-informed, culturally responsive trainings, the DHP strengthens each school's capacity to address conflict proactively and foster safer, more inclusive learning environments.

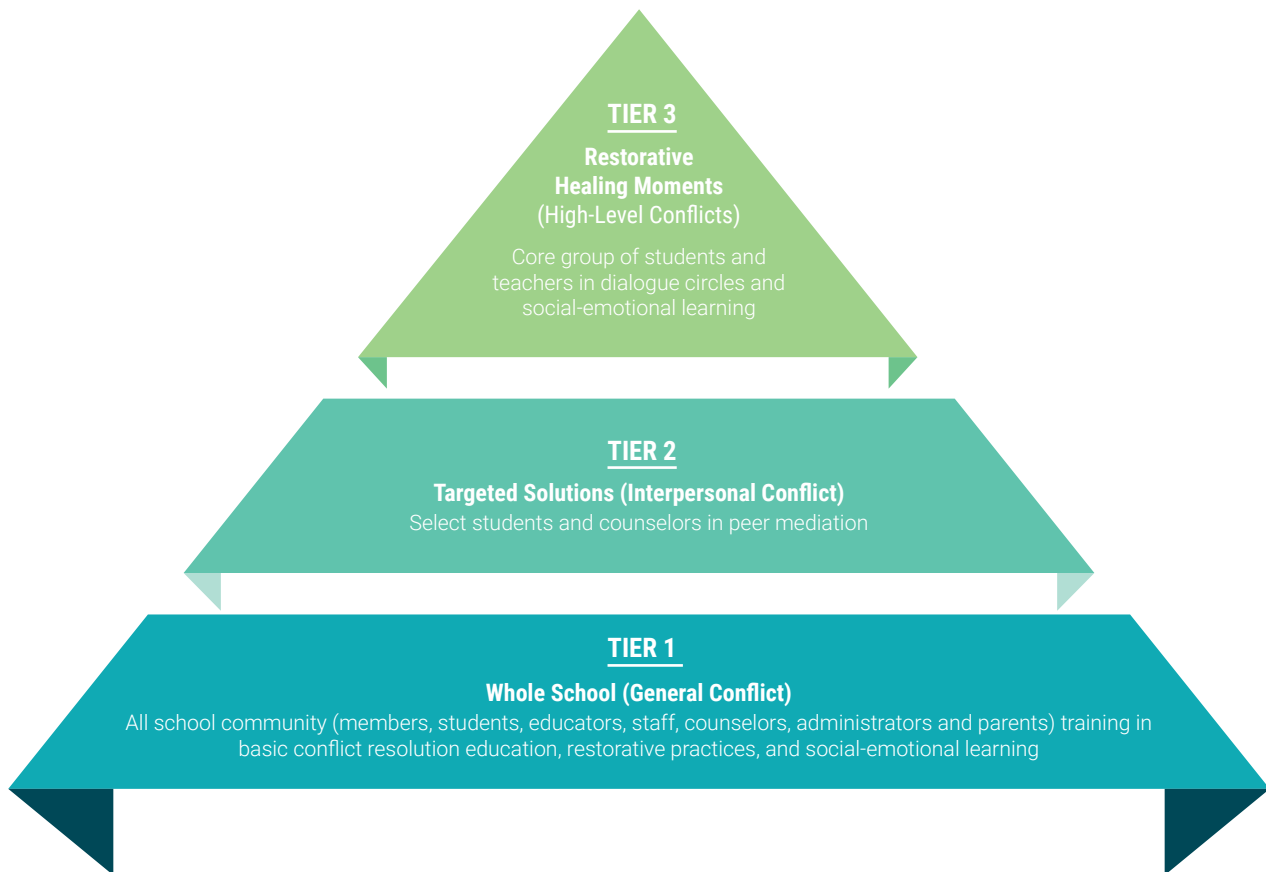
Parenting workshops further extend this impact beyond the classroom, equipping families with practical tools to reinforce SEL and conflict resolution skills at home. Schoolwide peacebuilding activities add another layer of cohesion, establishing shared practices and common language that promote empathy, unity, and student voice. Through this multi-tiered approach, the DHP provides schools with practical, sustainable tools that enhance relationships, improve school climate, and build long-term social-emotional resilience.

All program resources are accessible through the [Domestic Harmonizer Virtual Center](#), an open-source digital hub offering curriculum materials, training modules, implementation guides, and an interactive peace education game. This centralized platform ensures that students, educators, and families across our partner network, and beyond, can engage with the DHP content anytime, supporting consistent implementation, wider reach, and long-term program sustainability.



Programmatic Framework

Through a comprehensive Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) model, DHP engages entire school communities in creating environments rooted in safety, empathy, and inclusion.



In 2025, WPDI significantly expanded the reach and impact of the DHP, growing to 21 schools and educational institutions. New partnerships with El Rancho Unified School District (ELUSD) and the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) enabled us to introduce peer mediation, SEL, and restorative practices to a wider community of students, educators, and families. These collaborations, combined with our ongoing work with long-standing partners and regional agencies, have deepened program effectiveness and strengthened engagement across multiple districts.

A key highlight of the year was the continued success and expansion of our Lunch 'N Learn SEL series. Through monthly, theme-based activities rooted in kindness, gratitude, emotional awareness, and positive connection, the series has now reached thousands of students. These meaningful sessions have become a signature DHP offering, helping schools integrate SEL in fun, accessible, and community-building ways.

Another milestone was our formal partnership with the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh. This collaboration extends the reach of DHP beyond the United States and underscores the global relevance of conflict resolution, SEL, and youth leadership. By bringing the DHP model to an international audience, WPDI further demonstrates its commitment to fostering resilient, compassionate communities both locally and globally.



Key Achievements



17

schools hosting
WPDI programs

4

education institutions
hosting WPDI programs



466

students trained as
peer mediators

438

administrators and
teachers trained



51

students trained in
Social-Emotional
Learning

3,921

students reached
through SEL
workshops and events



284

parents reached
through virtual
workshops

155

active users of
the Virtual Center



2,406

people reached
through advocacy
campaigns in schools

7,041

students and families
indirect beneficiaries
of DHP activities

14,703

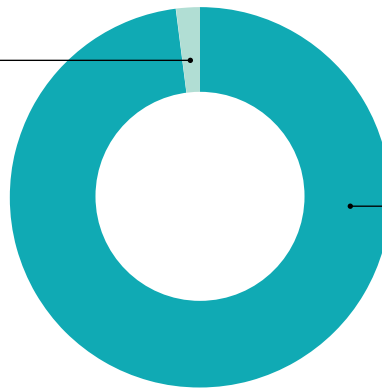
total participants in school-
based peacebuilding



Survey Results

Students: Did the program help you improve your behavior?

1.6%
No

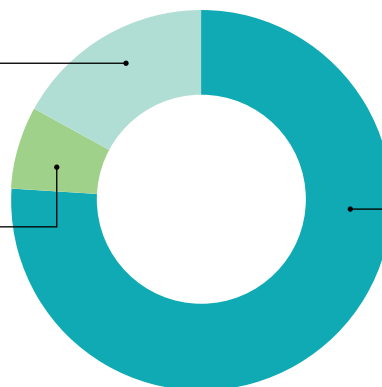


98.4%
Yes

Students: Does the program help you to be less angry with others?

16.7%
I don't know

7.7%
No



75.6%
Yes

Stakeholder Feedback



"As Coordinator in the Mental Health and School Counseling Unit at the Los Angeles County Office of Education and facilitator of the School Counselor Academy, I have had the privilege of collaborating with the Domestic Harmonizer Program as a professional learning partner for school counselors. Their PBIS-aligned, multi-tiered model of peace education and conflict resolution, grounded in restorative practices, peer mediation, and social-emotional learning, beautifully complements our countywide work to build comprehensive, equity-driven school counseling programs.

What sets Domestic Harmonizer apart is the way they equip educators, students, and families with practical, relationship-centered tools for communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution that fit seamlessly within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). In our School Counselor Academy, their framework has helped counselors reimagine their role not just as responders to crisis, but as leaders in cultivating a positive school climate, elevating student voice through peer mediation, and embedding SEL skills into everyday practice. As a county leader, I deeply value their commitment to whole-school transformation and am grateful for the ways their work expands the capacity of school counselors to create safe, inclusive, and healing-centered learning environments for all students."

Anna D. Heinbuch,

Ed.D., PPS, Coordinator II - School Counseling, Mental Health and School Counseling, Los Angeles County Office of Education



"Offering this training opportunity to schools across San Diego County and participating alongside our educators was such a meaningful and energizing experience. The two days of learning offered practical, accessible strategies that participants can immediately apply in their work, and that I can also bring into my role supporting the adults who care for our students. I was truly moved by the sense of connection that emerged throughout the training and the tremendous feedback we received.

It's clear that the skills centered on empathy, communication, and restorative practices are resonating deeply and making a real difference in school communities. The ripple effect of this work across our county is powerful, and I am grateful for the opportunity to partner in strengthening systems of care and support for students and the educators who serve them."

Lezya Weglarz,

M.S., PPS, Project Specialist, PK - 12 School Counseling Services Transformational Leadership & System Support, San Diego County Office of Education



Independent Evaluation of the Program

Since the launch of the DHP in 2016, the program has undergone independent evaluations each year to assess its impact. Over the past 6 years, Dr. Briana Hinga, Associate Professor of Clinical Education with the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California, has served as the DHP's independent evaluator.

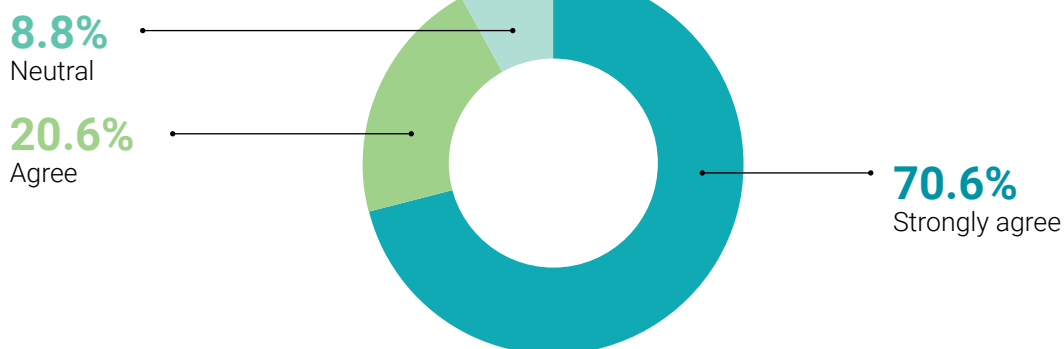


The 2024–2025 evaluation highlighted meaningful growth and positive feedback across students, educators, and parents. Students demonstrated increased self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and leadership skills, applying practical conflict resolution tools not only in the classroom but also in family and community settings. Educators reported enhanced confidence in integrating restorative practices and SEL strategies into classrooms, fostering a culture of mindful listening, empowerment, and shared problem-solving. Parents noted the value of workshops in supporting SEL skill development at home, reinforcing the program's reach beyond the school environment.

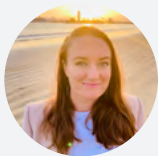
Dr. Hinga's findings underscore the transformative impact of DHP in promoting SEL, conflict resolution, and community-building. Students consistently reported that peer mediation and leadership opportunities allowed them to step into meaningful roles, strengthen relationships, and contribute positively to school climate. While challenges remain in scaling practices consistently across diverse school settings and having wider community impact, the evaluation affirms that DHP equips participants with tangible skills for personal growth, resilience, and constructive engagement, and demonstrates strong potential for systemic change when these practices are embedded within school culture.

Below are some of the findings from the External Evaluation surveys collected from 110 program participants:

Participants' response to "This workshop improved my understanding of conflict resolution"



On the Impact of the Peer Mediation Training



"Students valued learning how to guide peers toward self-generated solutions, hold each other accountable, and adapt their approach to different ages, personalities, and contexts. Many students expressed the importance of understanding the needs and emotions of people experiencing a conflict. As one student explained, *"There are... core feelings that everything stems from... peer mediation just helped me be more understanding in terms of hearing other people out."* Across schools, students reported that peer mediation equipped them with a range of conflict resolution skills, from concrete tools like active listening, breathing techniques, and setting ground rules, to deeper relational capacities like empathy, perspective-taking, and understanding unmet needs."

Dr. Hinga,

Associate Professor of Clinical Education at the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California



On the Impact of the Inner Spark program



"Students consistently described learning new tools for self-awareness, emotional regulation, and healthier communication, with many applying these skills not only in school but also at home and in their broader communities. They shared stories of becoming more patient siblings, supportive friends, and even emerging leaders who felt confident using their voices. Students also demonstrated a shift in how they approach conflict and peer support. They moved from giving quick advice toward listening, validating, and holding space for others. This reflects a deeper alignment with transformative practices of care and recognition."

Dr. Hinga,

Associate Professor of Clinical Education at the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California



On the Impact of Professional Development Workshops for Educators



"The educator professional development workshops provided through the DHP were received with overwhelming positivity. Participants consistently praised the facilitators' expertise and energy, the interactive design of the sessions, and the opportunity to connect through circles, dialogue, and hands-on practice. Educators reported leaving with valuable tools for conflict resolution, deeper empathy, and practical strategies for classroom and school-wide application. Participants also highlighted their own professional and personal growth, with many noting how the training reshaped their perspectives toward "connection over correction" and strengthened their capacity for active listening and empathy. Overall, the professional development workshops offered a meaningful and empowering experience, equipping educators with both the mindset and practical tools to support conflict resolution and restorative practices in their schools."

Dr. Hinga,

Associate Professor of Clinical Education at the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California





Conflict Resolution Education

Conflict Resolution Education

While the Domestic Harmonizer Program has an impressive collection of Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) curricula infused into Common Core subjects and housed online, in the DHP [Virtual Center](#), this year the program focused on deepening the quality and integration of its social-emotional and peer mediation content. The CRE curricula, spanning elementary through high school, provides educators with structured lessons, discussion prompts, and interactive exercises that help students build foundational skills in emotional awareness, communication, and collaborative problem-solving. These resources ensure that conflict resolution is not a standalone intervention, but a daily practice woven into literacy, social studies, and other academic subjects, reinforcing the idea that peaceful problem-solving is essential to learning and to life. By equipping educators with curriculum-aligned materials grounded in trauma-informed and restorative principles, DHP strengthened teachers' capacity to foster classrooms where students feel safe, respected, and empowered to express themselves. Schools that implemented the CRE materials saw improvements in classroom climate, more constructive peer interactions, and greater student engagement.

This year, DHP also introduced conflict coaching into the program's toolset. The new coaching manual provides a systematic, developmentally

appropriate process that guides individuals through understanding their emotions, identifying needs, reframing limiting beliefs, and moving toward constructive, values-aligned solutions. Conflict coaching supports students in developing self-awareness, resilience, and personal agency, especially when navigating internal, interpersonal, or inappropriate conflicts for formal mediation. For educators, the conflict coaching framework offers an accessible way to provide one-on-one support to students and colleagues experiencing ongoing challenges, helping them build skills rather than relying on punishment.

By integrating conflict coaching into its model, DHP expanded its capacity to meet the diverse needs of students and educators across grade levels. Some students benefit most from structured mediation, while others need personalized coaching that helps them reflect, regulate, and grow. The coaching tools also strengthened the connection between SEL and restorative practice, empowering educators to guide students toward healthier patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior. Together, these advancements underscore the DHP's commitment to evolving in response to student needs, educator feedback, and emerging best practices, ensuring that schools have the comprehensive tools necessary to build sustainable, peace-centered cultures.



Peer Mediation in Schools

17

schools hosting
WPDI's peer
mediation program

240

elementary school
students trained in
peer mediation

143

middle school
students trained in
peer mediation

83

high school
students trained in
peer mediation

This year, the peer mediation component of the DHP made a visible impact across participating campuses, an impact driven directly by students themselves. Unlike CRE, which equips entire classrooms with foundational skills, peer mediation places youth at the center of conflict transformation. Students learned how to mediate real disputes among classmates, guide peers through emotional tension, and help others find solutions rooted in understanding and respect. Whether a disagreement arose on the playground, during group work, or between friends, trained peer mediators stepped forward with calm, confidence, and compassion.

Educators reported a remarkable shift in school culture as student mediators began applying their training independently. Conflicts that once escalated to the counseling office were instead handled respectfully

between students. Younger mediators learned to articulate feelings and needs; middle schoolers practiced empathy in moments of frustration; and high school students emerged as role models, demonstrating leadership, emotional maturity, and a commitment to peace that influenced the entire campus. Many mediators shared that the skills they gained extended beyond school walls, helping them navigate conflict with siblings, parents, and relatives, transforming family interactions and communication patterns at home.

Peer mediation creates immediate and lasting impact, empowering students, reducing behavioral disruptions, and strengthening school communities. Each mediation fosters healing and learning, shaping positive school climates and relationships that extend beyond the classroom.

Conflict Resolution Education in Elementary Schools

Elementary school is a time of tremendous growth, when curiosity flourishes, friendships deepen, and children begin to understand themselves and the world around them. It is also a stage where emotions can feel big and overwhelming, and social dynamics can be challenging to navigate without guidance. Recognizing how foundational these years are for shaping lifelong skills, WPDI invested heavily in building CRE skills among young learners.

In 2025, WPDI partnered with 4th and 5th-grade classrooms across seven elementary schools in the Little Lake City School District (LLCSD), engaging 240 students in immersive CRE and SEL experiences. At this formative age, students embraced the tools of empathy, communication, and problem-solving with remarkable enthusiasm. They practiced naming their emotions, listening actively to their peers, and using structured steps to resolve disagreements, skills that not only reduce classroom disruptions but also build confidence, resilience, and healthier relationships. By equipping children early with these essential

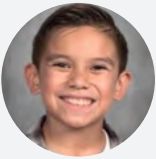
competencies, WPDI helps lay the groundwork for stronger school communities and empowers students to carry these abilities with them throughout their academic and personal lives.





"The peer mediators at Cresson Elementary School are beyond excited to support their classmates in resolving conflicts. As of today, they have already facilitated 11 formal mediation sessions. Many of our mediators have grown so confident in their skills that they are now able to guide on-the-spot mediations right in the classroom or out on the playground. We are beginning to see a real shift in our school culture. Students are no longer afraid to address conflicts directly, and we've created a community where they feel safe acknowledging mistakes and working together toward solutions. We are deeply grateful to the Domestic Harmonizer Program for providing this incredible opportunity, by empowering our students to grow as leaders, allies, and peacemakers."

Martha Robles,
School Counselor at Cresson Elementary School



"I am a peer mediator because I wanted to learn about peer mediation and I love to help people problem solve. When I help people, I feel nervous at first, but then I feel happy when I help people solve the problem. I would encourage those who like to problem solve and help people to become a peer mediator because it is fun, sometimes hard but you can still do it!"

Jay,
Peer Mediator, Cresson Elementary School



"I joined the peer mediators because I want to help people problem solve and I want to make sure we create a great community at Cresson. It makes me feel proud when I see people become friends again after they solve their problem with peer mediation. I would encourage those who have the heart to help others to join peer mediation."

Rhiley,
Peer Mediator, Cresson Elementary School



Impact story Lakeland Elementary School

Over the past 3 years, WPDI has partnered with Lakeland Elementary School, part of Lakeland Central School District. Lakeland serves a diverse student population, including many students from historically under-resourced and working-class families, where social-emotional support and conflict resolution skills are especially critical to student well-being and school climate. This context makes Lakeland an important site for sustained, relationship-based SEL work.

Through this partnership, the DHP team has trained multiple cohorts of student peer mediators, equipping them with practical tools to manage conflict, communicate effectively, and support their peers in resolving disagreements peacefully. Students learn how to listen with empathy, express their feelings constructively, and guide others toward fair and respectful solutions. These young leaders play an active role in fostering a more collaborative and supportive school environment.

Importantly, the impact of the peer mediation program extends beyond the classroom. Teachers and staff report that students are

applying these skills not only at school, but also at home and in their broader communities, helping siblings resolve conflicts, using calming strategies during moments of stress, and modeling respectful communication with peers and adults alike. The sustained presence of the program at Lakeland has allowed these skills to take root, reinforcing positive behaviors over time and empowering students to see themselves as capable problem-solvers and leaders.



"We are so grateful to have the Domestic Harmonizer program at Lakeland for the third school year! Students and staff alike have noticed an increase in peaceful problem solving from students TK-5th. Peer mediators learn so many important social skills that will reach well beyond elementary school through the intensive 2-day training at the beginning of the school year. It's wonderful to witness the mediators take such pride in their roles as peacekeepers on campus too."

Laura Duphily, School Counselor, Lakeland Elementary School



"As a peer mediator, I got trained on how to help solve problems when students aren't being kind during recess. This has taught me about respecting others. I have also learned how to respect myself. Peer mediation is a good program for kids who want to make a peaceful environment at school."

Mia, Student, Lakeland Elementary School



"What it means to be a peer mediator: Since becoming a peer mediator, I have learned to help solve conflicts, not give advice and not to take sides in a conflict. I have also learned a lot from the training and I will continue learning. Peer mediation helps us to create more peace through solving conflicts. Everyone should be in peer mediation to solve more problems and create more peace!"

Aarush, Student, Lakeland Elementary School

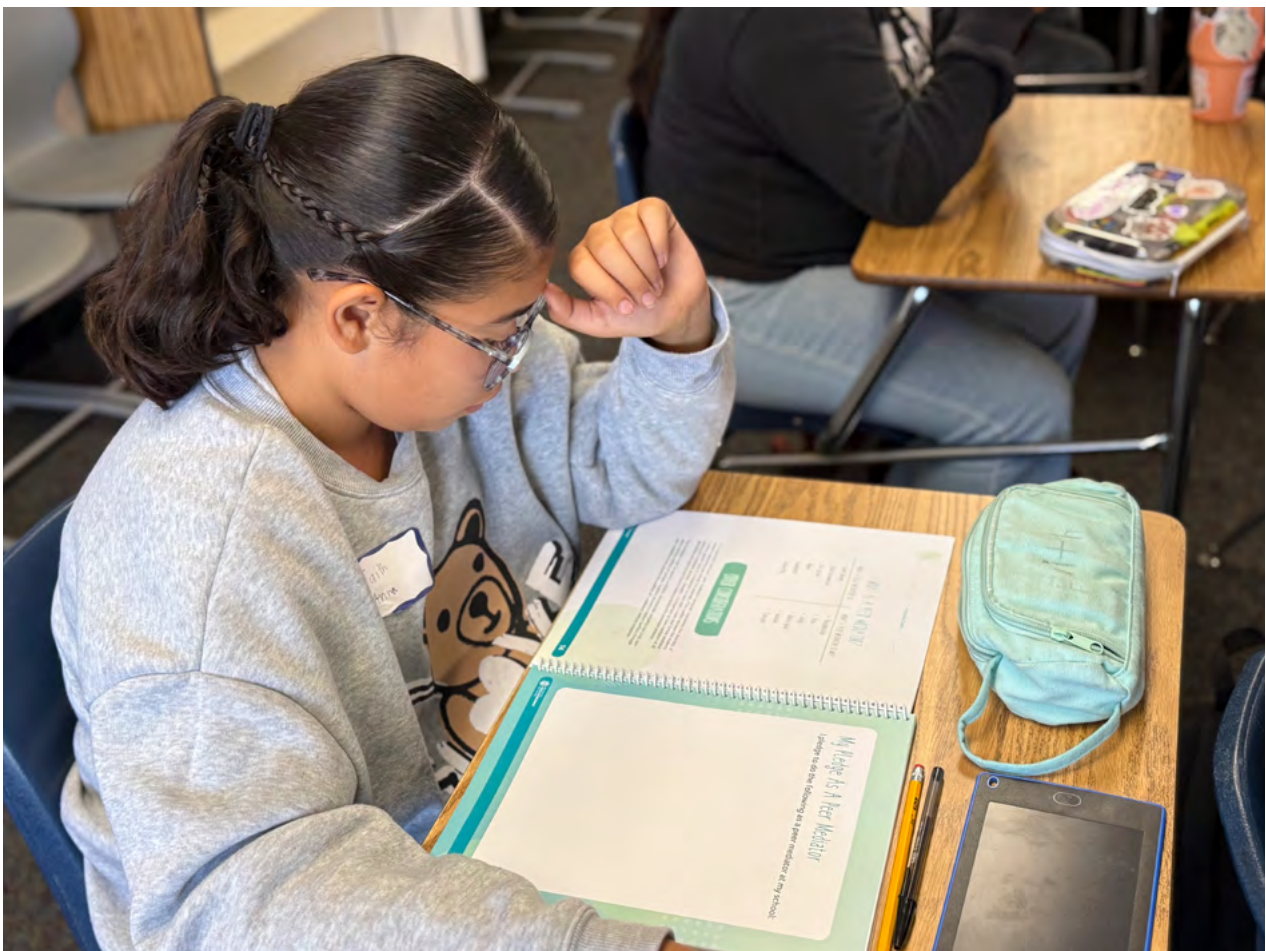


Conflict Resolution Education in Middle Schools

Middle school is a pivotal and often challenging chapter in a young person's life. As students navigate rapid cognitive, emotional, and social changes, conflicts become more complex and tied to identity, belonging, and peer relationships. Friendship tensions, shifting social hierarchies, miscommunications, and pressures to fit in can escalate quickly without structured support. At the same time, middle schoolers are developing a growing sense of independence and a deeper understanding of fairness and justice, making them uniquely receptive to the tools of conflict resolution when given the opportunity.

Recognizing these realities, DHP tailors its approach to meet the needs of this age group. WPDI integrates relatable scenarios, interactive activities, and guided conversations that help students identify and articulate their emotions, unpack misunderstandings, and build confidence in resolving conflicts. The program emphasizes communication, empathy, and accountability, skills that empower students to manage both everyday disagreements and more sensitive relational challenges common in adolescence.

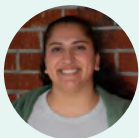
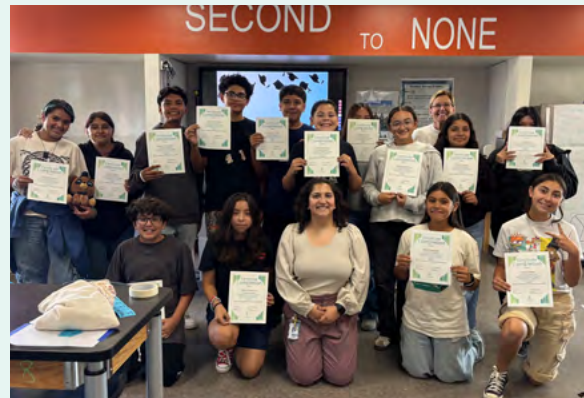
In 2025, WPDI strengthened its presence in middle schools, continuing long-standing work with Lake Center Middle School in Santa Fe Springs and DNA Prep Academy in Chatsworth, while expanding to new partners including STEAM Academy @ Burke, Rivera Middle School, and North Park Academy of the Arts in Pico Rivera. Across these campuses, students stepped into leadership roles as peer mediators, supporting classmates through conflicts that might otherwise disrupt learning or strain relationships. For middle schoolers, who are forming their identities, gaining independence, and seeking a sense of belonging, these skills are transformative. The program equips middle school students with the skills to resolve conflict, communicate effectively, and lead with empathy and agency, preparing them to become resilient, community-minded leaders in high school and beyond.



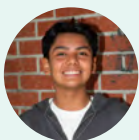
Spotlight on STEAM Academy @ Burke

STEAM Academy @ Burke is a dynamic, innovation-focused middle school in Pico Rivera, serving a diverse community of students navigating the complex social, emotional, and academic challenges of adolescence. We began working with this school as part of our new partnership with ERUSD, which launched in 2025. By collaborating closely with their outstanding Restorative Justice counselor and other highly engaging counselors, WPDJ was able to train a cohort of peer mediators who now serve as student leaders and conflict resolution ambassadors on campus. In addition, we hosted monthly Lunch 'N Learn SEL series, giving students structured opportunities to practice empathy, emotional regulation, and constructive communication.

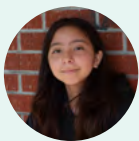
Middle school students in Pico Rivera, like their peers nationwide, face the pressures of forming identities, negotiating friendships, and balancing academic expectations with social dynamics. Through peer mediation and SEL activities, students at STEAM Academy @ Burke are learning to manage conflicts thoughtfully, strengthen relationships, and exercise leadership in ways that extend beyond the classroom. Educators have observed greater collaboration, accountability, and resilience among participants, while students report feeling more empowered, connected, and confident in their ability to contribute positively to their school community.



"This is my first year as a Restorative Justice Counselor at El Rancho Unified School District and having our Student Support Services department partner with the Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative with bringing the Domestic Harmonizer Program to our campus has already made a difference. Our Peer Mediators have demonstrated they are capable and able to communicate and facilitate dialogue between their peers that are in conflict. Along with having our Lunch 'N Learn activities for all students, this program has planted a seed in our commitment to becoming a restorative justice school. I appreciate everyone that is involved, especially our students who are making this possible." **Berenize Vazquez**, Restorative Justice Counselor, STEAM Academy @ Burke



"As a peer mediator, I find this program a big blessing to have at our school and I am lucky to have the opportunities to be one myself. I think the environment is awesome. People like Ms. Karen and Ms. Vazquez are great people with big hearts with a lot of experience. I also think it's a great way to find balance as a middle schooler going through puberty and sort of feeling lost. With peer mediation, it's encouraging students to find a peaceful way to solve a conflict instead of arguing with a better solution. Overall I think peer mediation is a blessing to have at STEAM Academy @ Burke." **Malakai**, Peer Mediator, STEAM Academy @ Burke



"As a peer mediator, this new experience has shown me many new things, and countless opportunities. I think it is great to have, along with it adding to our new safe space, "The Wellness Center." In the future, I am sure having this peer mediation program will add to the safeness, wellness, and overall feelings of the students of STEAM Academy @ Burke." **Skyline**, Peer Mediator, STEAM Academy @ Burke



Conflict Resolution Education in High Schools

High school is a transformative stage of self-discovery and increasing independence, but it also brings intense pressures. Students must navigate complex social dynamics, including friendships, peer hierarchies, and the pervasive influence of social media, while balancing academic expectations, college planning, and personal insecurities. Many also face deeper challenges, such as financial stress, trauma, or difficult home environments. These realities make the skills cultivated through DHP more essential than ever.

In 2025, WPDI continued its long-standing partnership with Cypress High School in the Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD) and launched a new collaboration with Salazar Continuation High School in ERUSD, exemplifying the power of a whole-school, multi-tiered approach to fostering growth and resilience. Across these campuses, students stepped into meaningful leadership roles through peer mediation training, learning to mediate disputes, communicate thoughtfully, and model restorative practices that transform school culture.

Through our programs, students gain the confidence and strategies to approach conflicts with empathy, listen deeply, and act as agents of positive change in their communities. They develop resilience, strengthen their emotional intelligence, and build the capacity to lead with integrity, skills that extend far beyond high school, empowering them to contribute thoughtfully to society while shaping safer, more inclusive, and compassionate school environments.



Salazar Continuation High School and WPDl: Building Leaders and Fostering Resilience

This year, WPDl launched a new partnership with Salazar Continuation High School, a small alternative high school in Pico Rivera within ERUSD. Salazar serves students who face academic, social, or personal challenges that make traditional high school settings difficult to navigate. Many students attend Salazar to catch up on credits, balance family or work responsibilities, or receive additional support for social-emotional and behavioral needs. Continuation high schools like Salazar provide a flexible, supportive environment that emphasizes individualized learning and skill-building, but they also face unique challenges, including heightened stress, exposure to trauma, and the need to re-engage students who may have become disengaged from school.

As part of this partnership, WPDl trained the school's counselors in peer mediation at LACOE, equipping staff with the knowledge and tools to mentor students and integrate conflict resolution practices into the school culture. Students at Salazar were then trained as peer mediators, stepping into leadership roles to guide classmates through conflicts, foster understanding, and model effective communication and restorative practices.

The impact has been immediate and meaningful. Students gained confidence in managing interpersonal challenges, improved their emotional regulation, and developed practical leadership skills. By embedding peer mediation into Salazar's unique learning environment, WPDl is helping students cultivate resilience, empathy, and a sense of agency. These are skills that extend beyond high school and prepare students to navigate life's challenges and contribute positively to their communities.



"Peer mediation training was a unique experience that I participated in. I felt comforted, seen, and understood. Feelings played a huge role in this experience, which was great because I don't think they are focused on enough in schools. Peer mediation training helped me in my personal life and I was very surprised in how the experience helped me view things in a healthier way." **Kenia**, Peer Mediator, Salazar Continuation High School



"I joined peer mediation because I was bored and wanted something to do having no idea what mediation was. I really thought I was going to be a therapist and then I started understanding what mediation actually was and I thought it was pretty cool. To be in mediation you have to be a good listener, you have to be impartial, and you have to keep things confidential which not to toot my own horn but I'm already good at. Overall it was a fire experience, I have even used the skills I learned in the outside world." **Aiden**, Peer Mediator, Salazar Continuation High School



"The peer mediation training program with students has made my year so far as an educator! As a CTE teacher and aspiring school counselor the core values, beliefs, and strategies from the program are right in line with what I believe the backbone to education and just life in general is. Regardless of the setting we need to be able to meet people where they are at by showing and expressing empathy, and the skills learned in peer mediation encourage just that. Our youth are hungrier for deeper connections than ever before and it is programs like this that are going to make the most lasting positive impacts." **Mr. Matthew Rojas**, CTE Teacher, Salazar Continuation High School



"The Peer Mediation Program has been a wonderful experience and resource for our students. Students have learned valuable skills including effective communication, active listening, and empathy. This will support their ability to resolve conflict in a positive and peaceful manner- both at school and in their personal lives. It's been wonderful to see students gain the confidence to practice these skills! I look forward to bringing this program to more of our students." **Sandra Laguna**, Mental Health Counselor, Salazar Continuation High School



Conflict Resolution Education for Teachers

In 2025, WPDI engaged educators in train-the-trainer peer mediation and conflict coaching workshops. These trainings reached 438 educators. This was done primarily with our work with our pre-existing partner, Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) as well as our new partner, San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE).

Beyond core training sessions, WPDI facilitated monthly virtual workshops with educators and district leaders in the North Central Educational Service District (NCESD), alongside periodic sessions with the Northwest Educational Service District (NWESD) in Washington State. The virtual monthly sessions are about trauma-informed practices, conflict resolution tools, peer mediation and more. WPDI also had the chance to present a conflict coaching seminar to all educators across the Green Dot Public Schools on the topic of conflict coaching.



438 teachers and school administration staff trained in Conflict Resolution Education



Expansion of our Work with the NCESD

In 2024, WPDI began an important partnership with the NCESD, one of Washington State's nine regional Educational Service Districts. Located in Wenatchee and serving a vast, largely rural region, including Chelan, Douglas, Grant, and Okanogan counties, NCESD provides vital support to 30 school districts.

Their mission is to offer shared services, professional development, technical assistance, and innovation support that strengthen teaching, learning, and whole-child wellbeing across the region. Because many of the districts are small or geographically dispersed, NCESD plays a critical role in ensuring that educators have equitable access to high-quality training and resources.

Over the past year, our partnership with NCESD expanded, broadening our reach across the region. Through a series of virtual monthly sessions, we engaged 46 educators from all 30 districts in professional learning focused on restorative practices, trauma-informed approaches, and social-emotional skill-building. Throughout the school year, these sessions introduced educators

to foundational peer mediation concepts, explored the nature of trauma and trauma responses, and provided conflict-coaching tools to support students more effectively. As the year progressed, we guided participants through practical methods for regulating the nervous system, strengthening growth mindsets, setting meaningful goals, and engaging in shadow work to better understand internal patterns. We also covered themes of self-worth and locus of control, culminating in advanced emotional regulation strategies that educators can use personally and teach to their students.

This ongoing collaboration, which will continue through 2026, reflects our commitment to offering sustained, transformative training rather than one-time workshops. By working through NCESD's regional network, WPDI is helping equip educators across rural and underserved districts with the tools to cultivate safer, more connected, and emotionally supportive school communities.





"We're incredibly grateful for the Domestic Harmonizer Program! Their training has been transformative for our MASH team in fostering a deeper sense of empathy and cultivating strong inclusive conversations. Our series with our school partners has empowered our educators to create a more supportive and healing-centered environment. This collaboration has truly enriched our school community and enhanced our social-emotional work."

Anna Troutman,
Assistant Special Education Director, North Central Educational Service District



"Our sessions with Karen are the grounding and inspiration of my work. Not only do I come away with new knowledge and new tools, but I come away feeling connected to my WHY. It is a deep cleansing breath each month. I am so grateful for people like Karen (and all of the DHP) who are committing themselves to spreading peace during this time."

Adrian Chavey,
Inclusion Coach, North Central Educational Service District



Parenting Series

The DHP provides a virtual parenting series, "Parenting to Meet Our Children's Needs," designed to support families in cultivating nurturing, resilient, and connected home environments. This series aligns with DHP's mission to foster restorative practices and trauma-informed approaches across the entire school community, recognizing that lasting social-emotional growth requires strong partnerships between schools, students, and families.

Through these workshops, parents explore self-leadership, effective communication, and strategies to strengthen family bonds. Mr. Stedman Graham emphasizes the importance of identity leadership and personal growth, encouraging parents to model confidence and self-awareness for their children. Mrs. Karen DeVoogd provides practical tools in communication and conflict coaching to bridge gaps, helping families navigate difficult conversations with empathy and understanding. Mr. Anand Chulani guides parents in embracing each family member's uniqueness and adaptability, promoting healing and harmony within the household.

This year, WPDI expanded the series to include a new session specifically for parents. Conflict Coaching for Families. Conflict coaching is a structured, one-on-one process that helps individuals reflect on a challenging situation, clarify their goals, understand their emotional triggers, and develop effective strategies to manage or resolve the conflict. Rather than focusing on blame, conflict coaching equips people with practical communication tools, emotional-awareness techniques, and step-by-step problem-solving approaches that they can apply immediately in real-life situations.

In a family setting, these tools are especially powerful. Parents learn how to model calm, constructive behavior during disagreements, set healthy boundaries, and de-escalate tense moments before they become power struggles. They also learn to guide their children through conflicts with patience, empathy, and curiosity, teaching them how to name their feelings, understand different perspectives, and generate their own solutions. This benefits not only parent-child dynamics but also strengthens how children handle peer issues, sibling tensions, and

284 parents and guardians trained



school-based conflicts. By equipping parents with conflict-coaching strategies, WPDl helps create a ripple effect at home that reinforces students' social-emotional growth and supports a more restorative, connected school community.

Through this initiative, 284 parents and guardians participated in 2025, gaining tools for personal growth, relational development, and family resilience.

By equipping parents to lead with empathy and confidence, the DHP strengthens the foundation of support around students, helping to cultivate safer, more compassionate school communities where restorative and trauma-informed practices thrive.

Advocacy Campaigns in Schools

As part of its mission to foster a culture of peace, WPDl enhances its school-based initiatives with advocacy campaigns across schools. These campaigns spread key messages that promote positive values and attitudes aligned with peacebuilding. Additionally, they help increase the visibility of our programs, strengthening our presence and influence at the community level.

International Day of Peace

In honor of the International Day of Peace, 2,271 students across DHP partner schools in Southern California came together to celebrate the importance of peace. This year's theme, "Act Now for a Peaceful World," provided students with opportunities to participate in hands-on, social-emotional learning activities that foster empathy, collaboration, and leadership.

At STEAM Academy @ Burke, 50 students created pinwheels with messages of peace, while North Park Academy of the Arts engaged 60 students in art projects, heart-shaped reflections, and peer affirmations. Elementary schools also participated widely: Lakeland Elementary hosted 310 students in mindfulness exercises and chalk art, Jersey Avenue Elementary engaged 230 students in collaborative projects, and Studebaker Elementary involved nearly 300 students in creative peace activities

during recess. Lake Center Middle School launched a new Gaming Club to practice empathy and teamwork year-round. Cresson Elementary involved 235 students and 18 staff in community-focused projects, while William Orr Elementary engaged 360 students in reflective peace activities. Paddison Elementary students painted 250 rocks as symbols of unity and hope, DNA Prep Academy prepared 280 lunch bags for those in need, students at Cypress High School engaged in crafts, and Switzer Learning Center students created peace journals to document reflections and messages of kindness.

Across all grade levels, these activities demonstrated student creativity, compassion, and leadership, reinforcing DHP's mission to integrate social-emotional learning, restorative practices, and community engagement into school culture.





The Virtual Center

The Domestic Harmonizer Virtual Center is an open-source platform designed to support educators, parents, and students in building skills for conflict resolution, SEL, and community connection. The resource hub offers a comprehensive collection of materials, including lesson plans, worksheets, animated videos, and interactive games, that engage students while equipping educators with practical tools to teach peaceful, restorative approaches to conflict. The Virtual Center houses the full curriculum for teachers, counselors, and students across elementary, middle, and high schools, providing a consistent foundation for social-emotional growth.

In 2025, WPDl expanded the Virtual Center to include 7 new Inner Spark videos exploring key SEL concepts, such as shadow work, cognitive restructuring, Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), and other strategies grounded in neuroplasticity and personal growth. These videos combine engaging storytelling with practical exercises, allowing students, parents, and educators to rewire patterns of thought and

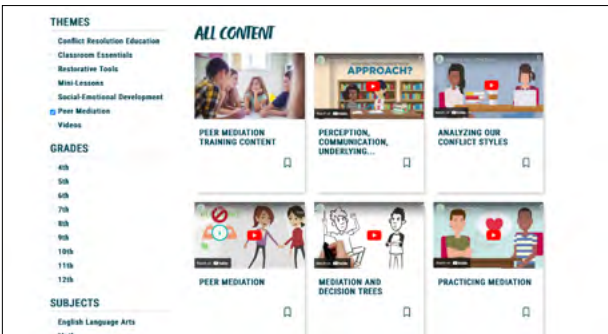
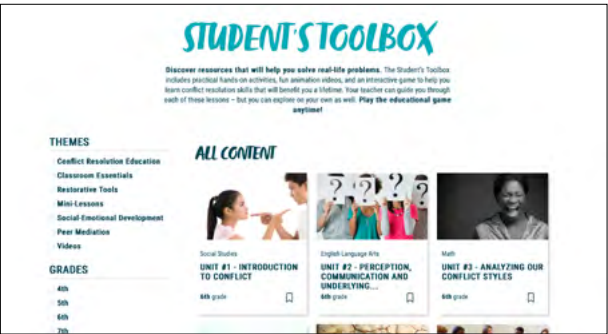
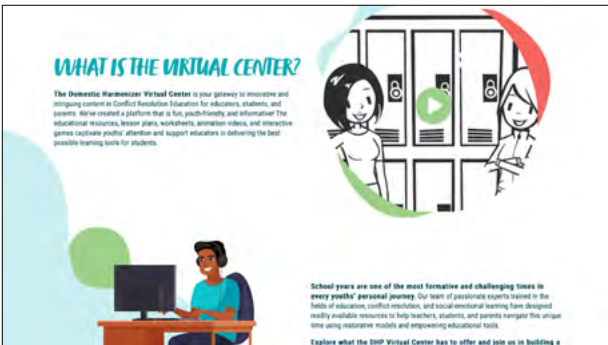
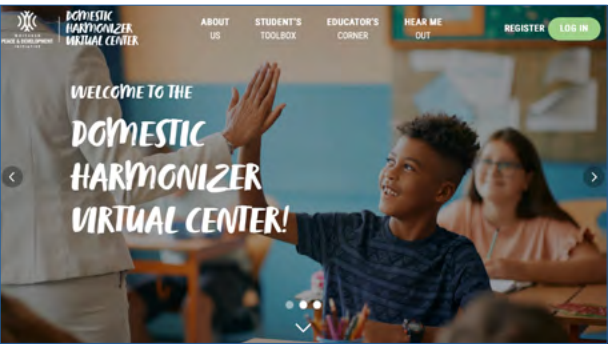
behavior, develop self-awareness, regulate emotions, and build healthier relationships. For the first time this year, the Virtual Center also features a Parent Hub, a dedicated space offering parents tools and guidance in conflict resolution, emotional understanding, and effective communication. The Parent Hub ensures that families, not just classrooms, benefit from DHP's transformative approaches, empowering parents to model and reinforce SEL practices at home.

To broaden the reach and visibility of the Virtual Center, WPDl also launched a dynamic social media campaign in the spring of 2025. Through engaging posts, videos, and interactive content, the campaign showcased the Virtual Center's innovative resources, and invited a wider audience to explore the tools and lessons available online. This campaign brought excitement, awareness, and energy to the Virtual Center, connecting schools, parents, and communities to DHP's mission and inspiring a broader conversation about the importance of SEL and peaceful conflict resolution.



In an increasingly complex world, the need for practical skills in empathy, resilience, and constructive conflict resolution has never been greater. With these expansions, WPDl strengthens its

commitment to supporting schools and families in fostering understanding, harmony, and lasting social-emotional growth. All resources and new content can be explored at www.domesticharmonizer.org.





Health and Well-being

From empowering high school students through Inner Spark leadership training to embedding Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) practices into elementary and middle school activities, the DHP creates safe, engaging spaces where learning, healing, and personal growth intersect. Students develop practical strategies to manage stress, regulate emotions, resolve conflicts constructively, and lead with empathy. These are skills that extend beyond the classroom; they strengthen their families, peer groups, and broader communities.

Through consistent practice and guidance, these competencies help students navigate challenges with confidence and contribute positively to the environments around them.

WPDI's Health and Well-being programs are designed to cultivate resilience, emotional intelligence, and personal empowerment across entire school communities. These initiatives equip individuals, with a focus on youth, with the knowledge, skills, and support to navigate life's challenges, process and heal from trauma, and build meaningful, supportive relationships.

By addressing critical gaps in mental health support, trauma-informed practices, and SEL, WPDI ensures that students, educators, and families have the tools they need to thrive both inside and outside the classroom.

Inner Spark

For teens eager to drive personal and collective growth, Inner Spark is a project that emphasizes mindfulness, conflict transformation, and self-improvement strategies that help students tackle challenges like stress, anxiety, trauma, and relationship-building. The practice of being in community with others, safe to share their feelings and experiences, transformed the way they related to their own emotions. Participants are encouraged to speak their truths, confront biases, and take risks, knowing that discomfort is often part of the process of transformation.

Deepening Inner Spark at Cypress High School

This year marked the second year that Inner Spark was implemented at Cypress High School in Cypress, California, as part of WPDI's commitment to fostering social-emotional growth, leadership, and peer support among high school students. Cypress High School serves a diverse student body, with a wide range of cultural, socioeconomic, and academic backgrounds, providing an ideal environment to cultivate inclusive leadership and restorative practices. The students at Cypress are highly engaged, eager to learn, and deeply supportive of their peers, demonstrating remarkable maturity, focus, and dedication throughout the program.

Inner Spark is designed to empower students to take ownership of their social-emotional growth, build resilience, and practice leadership in real-life contexts. The program's purpose and vision is to equip teens with the mindsets, toolsets, and

skillsets necessary to navigate complex social dynamics, manage conflict constructively, and contribute positively to their school and community. It emphasizes self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, and peer mentorship, helping students develop not only personal competencies but also the ability to guide others through challenges.

Building on this strong foundation, the WPDI team enhanced the Inner Spark curriculum in 2025 with new tools and approaches designed to deepen student engagement and expand learning experiences. Students explored additional somatic practices, goal-setting exercises, and techniques to integrate emotional awareness into everyday challenges. To further enrich the curriculum, WPDI produced 7 new educational explainer videos, covering topics such as identifying triggers, cognitive restructuring, mindful body meditation, and other transformative SEL practices. These videos provide students with accessible, engaging, and practical guidance, empowering them to apply Inner Spark tools both independently and in peer-support contexts. By combining these new resources with the hands-on exercises and reflective practices already in place, the program offers an even more dynamic and inspiring pathway for students to cultivate resilience, empathy, and leadership.

Students engaged deeply with the curriculum, which combines reflective learning, interactive exercises, and peer-to-peer mentoring. Core tools and practices included:

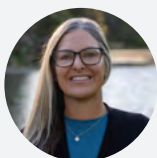
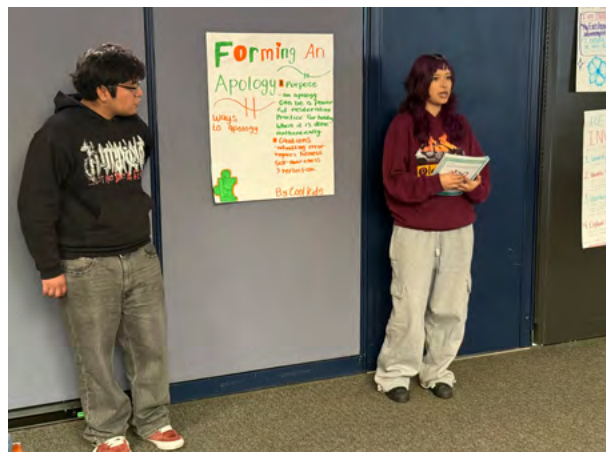
- Understanding triggers: Identifying personal emotional triggers and developing strategies to respond thoughtfully rather than react impulsively.
- Understanding trauma: Learning how trauma can shape thoughts, behaviors, and relationships, and applying strategies for self-regulation and empathy toward others.
- Breathwork: Techniques to regulate the nervous system, reduce stress, and return to a state of calm during challenging moments.



- Mindful body scans: Practices that increase awareness of bodily sensations and tension, helping students recognize stress responses and practice self-care.
- Reframing inner dialogue: Methods for recognizing negative self-talk and replacing it with constructive, empowering thoughts.
- Conflict resolution strategies: Step-by-step approaches to de-escalate conflicts, foster understanding, and collaboratively generate solutions.
- Active listening and empathy exercises: Strengthening interpersonal communication and deepening connections with peers.
- Mentorship skills: Guiding peers through emotional regulation and conflict management while modeling leadership behaviors.

Beyond personal growth, students learned how to mentor others, stepping into leadership roles within the school community. They facilitated peer mediation exercises, supported classmates in resolving conflicts, and modeled restorative practices, fostering a culture of empathy, accountability, and collaboration.

The impact of Inner Spark at Cypress High School has been profound. Students reported enhanced self-awareness, confidence, and emotional regulation. By embedding Inner Spark into daily school life, DHP empowers students to develop resilience, leadership, and agency, equipping them to support themselves, their peers, and the broader community in meaningful and lasting ways. This program exemplifies DHP's vision of creating compassionate, skills-driven, and empowered youth who are prepared to lead with empathy and contribute to a more peaceful, connected society.



"Inner Spark has been a real change for good on the Cypress High School campus. Both students and I have seen changes in students' ability to ask for what they need, set goals, and become helpers to others in their lives. I can see more resilience and coping skills in those involved, as well as sharing those skills amongst their peers. These students are beginning to step forward as mentors and compassionate leaders on campus. This has all been made possible by the WPDI program and the incredible training they've received."

Shelley Hawkins,
Health Teacher and Inner Spark and Peer Mediation Coordinator,
Cypress High School



"To start off, my passion is to help. It feels like my calling is helping people out of dark places and helping them find their light in their lives. I want to be the person that people come to for help or just a place to unwind. So that's why Inner Spark and Peer Mediation were just the right learning experience for me. It gets me motivated to want to help the people around me and get to know the human nature within emotions and having an understanding to find assistance to stress and anxiety while being in a stressful place such as high school. I feel so honored to have found a place like Inner Spark and Peer Mediation to jumpstart my dream career."

Kimberly,
Inner Spark & Peer Mediator participant, Cypress High School





"In Inner Spark, I feel safe, welcomed, and appreciated. This class teaches great values, and they stick for a long time. I believe this class is much more than just supporting peers but life lessons that make you feel good about being yourself. It is a very well-taught program and the assigned mentors are always welcoming and make you feel safe, appreciated, and acknowledged. It also can help with stressful situations and allow you time to reflect, especially using the tools. Tools have been extremely helpful for me. I appreciate the amount of tools we are given; everyone copes differently to things."

Sophia,
Inner Spark participant, Cypress High School



"Inner Spark was a really good program because it showed all the tools that I can use when I or somebody is feeling stressed like the vision board, which I think would help me in my future to plan what I want to do with my life in short, medium and long terms."

Juan,
Inner Spark participant, Cypress High School



Formal Launch of the Lunch 'N Learn SEL Series

In 2025, WPDH launched the inaugural Lunch 'N Learn SEL Series, marking a strategic expansion of DHP. This pilot program responded to growing school requests for frequent, developmentally appropriate SEL experiences that foster emotional well-being, conflict resolution, and positive school culture for younger learners.

Built on the framework and lesson models from the Lunch 'N Learn SEL Instructor Manual, the series delivers short, high-impact lessons during lunch periods or brief student breaks. Each session draws from DHP's core approach: grounding youth in mindfulness, self-awareness, emotional regulation, communication skills, and community-building practices. The program's purpose is to help students develop foundational emotional skills, including kindness, gratitude, empathy, communication, and self-regulation, while providing practical tools to navigate stress and conflict in age-appropriate ways.

The vision is to empower students with lifelong habits of emotional awareness and compassion, while strengthening the overall climate of their schools.

The Lunch 'N Learn series follows a structured instructional design that balances consistency with flexibility, allowing it to be implemented effectively across diverse elementary and middle school settings. Each session begins with clear learning

objectives aligned with core SEL competencies and incorporates warm-up prompts, such as emotion check-ins or gratitude reflections, to help students recognize their internal states and build emotional vocabulary. Students engage in hands-on activities that are fun and interactive, including creating kindness lollipop affirmations, decorating grocery or gratitude bags for donation to local food shelters, and practicing grounding tools such as Calm Palm breathing. Games and collaborative exercises provide additional opportunities for students to practice empathy, cooperation, and mindful communication. Sessions conclude with guided reflections connecting lessons to real-life experiences, while optional teacher-led extension activities allow skills to be reinforced during class. Together, these elements create a cohesive framework that supports developmental growth while accommodating each school's unique environment.

The series is structured around monthly SEL themes that scaffold student learning throughout the year:

- September – Self-Awareness & Mindfulness: Students explore emotions, body cues, and strategies for staying calm and focused.
- October – Empathy & Kindness: Activities include the Kindness Lollipop Project and peer gratitude exchanges.





- November – Gratitude & Giving Back: Students create decorated bags donated to a local food bank, connecting emotional awareness to compassionate action.
- December – Emotional Regulation: The Calm Palm grounding technique teaches breath work and body awareness.
- January – Friendship & Communication: Lessons focus on listening, speaking with clarity, and understanding social cues.
- February – Responsible Decision-Making: Students use problem-solving models to evaluate choices and outcomes.
- March – Growth Mindset: Students view challenges as opportunities, celebrate effort, and practice positive self-talk to strengthen persistence and resilience.
- April – Personal Responsibility: Lessons emphasize understanding the impact of actions, making thoughtful choices, and developing accountability.
- May – Self-Leadership & Reflection: Students consolidate SEL skills, reflect on personal growth, and explore how to continue applying emotional regulation, empathy, and responsible decision-making beyond the school year.

The Lunch 'N Learn series continues to show how brief, intentional SEL experiences can create meaningful change across a school community. Educators have observed encouraging outcomes, including stronger emotional vocabulary, more respectful peer interactions, and increased collaboration among students. Many schools also noted an overall improvement in school climate, highlighting the program's ability to foster connection and empathy.



Formal Partnership with the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh



In 2025, the DHP formalized its partnership with the Asian University for Women (AUW) in Chittagong, Bangladesh. AUW is a trailblazing institution committed to providing higher education to women from diverse, underrepresented, and marginalized communities across Asia and the Middle East. Many students face significant social and economic barriers, including limited access to education, gender-based discrimination, and societal pressures that challenge their personal and professional growth. Through this partnership, WPDl seeks to empower these talented women to become confident leaders, peacebuilders, and catalysts for transformative change in their communities.

Building on prior collaborations in conflict resolution training, WPDl is now working directly with a cohort of AUW Master's students to learn and implement peer mediation programs across the university's diverse campus. This initiative equips students with practical tools to navigate interpersonal challenges, facilitate inclusive dialogue, and mentor their peers, fostering a sustainable culture of empathy, accountability, and collaboration. Simultaneously, WPDl is training AUW faculty and staff in restorative practices, conflict resolution strategies, and SEL, ensuring that the values of understanding, respect, and cooperation are embedded throughout campus life.

WPDl's Inner Spark program will also be introduced at AUW, bringing trauma-informed leadership development, stress management techniques, and peer-support strategies to students who are poised to become influential leaders in their countries. Many AUW students have experienced trauma and conflict in their communities, and the combined approach of peer mediation and Inner Spark provides a holistic framework for cultivating emotional intelligence, resilience, and social responsibility.

At the heart of this expansion is WPDl's unwavering commitment to empowering women and advancing peace education. By supporting AUW students and faculty in developing skills for dialogue, empathy, and leadership, WPDl is helping to create a ripple effect of positive change, enabling women to strengthen their communities, champion social justice, and promote sustainable peace across the region. This partnership exemplifies how education, empowerment, and guided leadership can transform lives and build a more peaceful, equitable future.





"Our partnership with the Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative has been incredibly rewarding. The opportunity to have WPDI train our students has been invaluable, aligning seamlessly with our Wellness Ambassadors programme. The programme's focus on conflict resolution and social-emotional learning has provided our students with essential tools to navigate challenges and build stronger relationships. Their approach has fostered a more positive and supportive environment across our campus. We are grateful for this collaboration and look forward to continuing our partnership with WPDI and expanding our involvement in the future."

Dr. Syeda Fatema Alam,
Director of Wellness, Asian University for Women



"Being part of the SEL and Peer Mediation program has been an inspiring experience for me. I have seen our students begin to look at conflict as something natural, not something to fear or avoid. They now understand that behind every disagreement there is often an unmet need, and this helps them approach each other with more care and curiosity. What makes me happiest is seeing students come willingly to resolve their issues. They want to listen to their peers, not only to solve the conflict, but also to support them emotionally. This program has helped create a space where students feel safe, heard, and ready to help one another. I truly appreciate WPDI for making this possible and for strengthening a culture of empathy and peer support on our campus."

Alham Rahimi,
Former MA Education Student, Peer Mediator-Policy and Research
Officer Asian University for Women's Mental Wellness Centre



"Working with the Domestic Harmonizer Program has been one of the most meaningful parts of my professional journey. Facilitating Dr. Karen's sessions was truly wonderful, not only as a space to apply my skills but also a continuous learning experience. Every cohort, with its diversity of voices, widened my perspective and deepened my empathy. Coaching these sessions often felt like stepping into an open landscape. With each interaction, the "tall buildings" of bias, both for and against, seemed to fade. As they disappeared, I could see people more clearly, understand their stories more openly, and recognize conflict as a natural human experience rather than an obstacle."

Zahra Hashemi,
MA Education Student, SEL Coach, Asian University for Women



Connecting with Counselors Nationwide

In July, WPDl participated in the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Annual Conference, where we hosted a booth and engaged with school counselors, educators, and education leaders from across the country. This national gathering provided a valuable platform to share the DHP with practitioners working in diverse school settings and to raise awareness of DHP's impact and approach to SEL, conflict resolution, and restorative practices.

Equally important, the conference offered meaningful opportunities for learning and connection. Through conversations with fellow educators and exposure to emerging trends and best practices in school counseling and student support, our team gained insights that will inform and strengthen future program design and implementation. Participation in ASCA reinforced WPDl's commitment to continuous learning, collaboration, and ensuring that the DHP remains responsive, relevant, and aligned with the evolving needs of schools nationwide.



Conclusion

As 2025 comes to a close, WPDI reflects on a year of meaningful growth, innovation, and impact across our programs. From engaging more than 2,200 students in International Day of Peace celebrations across California to the successful launch of the Lunch 'N Learn SEL series, the year demonstrated the power of intentional, developmentally appropriate programming to foster empathy, resilience, and leadership in young people. Throughout the year, schools, students, and educators embraced WPDI's tools and approaches, contributing to safer, more compassionate learning environments where conflict is addressed constructively and social-emotional skills are nurtured every day. With several new school district partnerships on the horizon, WPDI is well positioned to expand both the reach and depth of its programming.

In 2026, WPDI plans to further scale its impact through expanded Inner Spark leadership and trauma-informed programming in high schools and youth-

serving organizations, alongside additional Lunch 'N Learn SEL sessions in elementary and middle schools. WPDI will also continue to implement and grow comprehensive workshops for educators and school staff. By deepening engagement with existing partners and establishing new district partnerships, WPDI will ensure that more students and educators have access to the tools, skills, and support needed to thrive socially, emotionally, and academically.

Our vision remains clear and our commitment unwavering: to equip students, educators, and families with the confidence, skills, and capacity to create safer schools, stronger families, and more just, peaceful communities. With each student empowered, each educator trained, and each family supported, the DHP continues to plant seeds of change that will grow into lasting, transformative impact; locally, nationally, and globally.



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